

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP)**

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Border Patrol Agents Rescue 53 Undocumented Immigrants Trapped in a Tractor-Trailer

EL CENTRO, Calif. – On Saturday evening, Border Patrol agents of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) assigned to the U.S. Highway 86 traffic checkpoint near Indio, California rescued 53 undocumented immigrants trapped in a tractor-trailer. A total of 49 undocumented immigrants were rescued from a confined space within a refrigerated trailer with freezing temperatures of 34 degrees. Additionally, four undocumented immigrants were located in hidden compartments in the cabin area of the truck.

On August 16, 2003, at approximately 11:45 p.m., a freightliner tractor-trailer entered the primary inspection lane of the Indio Border Patrol Station traffic checkpoint located near Westmorland, California. A request to search the sleeper area and was granted by the driver. While conducting a brief search of the cabin, an agent discovered a female hidden underneath some blankets. After questioning the female, it was determined that she was a citizen and national of Mexico illegally in the United States. The agent directed and escorted the tractor-trailer into the secondary inspection area for a further search of the cabin and trailer.

In a subsequent search of the vehicle, agents discovered three additional females hiding in confined compartments in the cabin and 49 people hiding in the back of the cargo trailer. All of the individuals admitted to being citizens and nationals of Mexico illegally in the United States without immigration documents. At the time of the discovery, the people in the cargo area complained of numbness in their legs, arms and others complained of severe headaches. Additionally, the females discovered inside the cabin area complained of heat exhaustion from being in a cramped, confined space underneath the sleeper compartment.

Although none of the immigrants required medical attention, they stated they were glad that the agents discovered them due to the cold temperature that was set at 34 degrees in the cargo trailer.

The driver and passenger were arrested and charged with Transporting Undocumented Immigrants, which carries a possible maximum \$250,000 fine and five years imprisonment of each illegal immigrant transported.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is an agency within the Department of Homeland Security that unifies Customs, Immigration and Agriculture inspectors and the Border Patrol.

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